

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Ray Yuen

Ray Yuen was born in Pāhala, Hawai'i in 1914. He lived in Hilo until the death of his mother in the early 1920s. He and his brother and two sisters then moved to Honoka'a and lived with his maternal grandparents. When his father remarried in 1925, Yuen returned to Hilo to live with his father and stepmother. He attended Honoka'a School, Kapi'olani School (in Hilo), Hilo Intermediate School and graduated from Hilo High School in 1935.

He then began his long career with the *Hilo Tribune-Herald* where he held a variety of jobs, including advertising salesman, sports editor, police reporter, court reporter, job-printing salesman, circulation salesman, and eventually editor in 1962.

During World War II, Yuen was working in circulation and recalls an increase in subscribers. He remembers the paper having to get clearance from the FBI before publication during the war years.

In 1974 he left the paper to work for Senator Hiram Fong as a legislative aide in Washington D.C. After returning to Hilo two years later, he worked for the Office of Manpower Resources as a planner for programs funded by the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration. He retired in 1982.

Since that time, he has been a member of the Board of Directors of the Hawai'i County Economic Opportunity Council. He is married and has five children.

Tape Nos. 22-70-1-93 and 22-71-1-93

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Ray Yuen (RY)

April 26, 1993

Hilo, Hawai'i

BY: Holly Yamada (HY)

[Editor's note: The interviewee has made extensive changes to this transcript. Unlike the rest of the project, parentheses are not used to signal these changes.]

HY: This is an interview with Mr. Ray Yuen on April 26, 1993, at his home in Hilo, Hawai'i. The interviewer is Holly Yamada. Let's start with when you were born.

RY: I was born in Pāhala in 1914.

HY: Nineteen fourteen. Okay. And can you talk a little bit about what you remember about Pāhala?

RY: I have no memory of Pāhala.

HY: And you lived there until you were about seven or eight, is that right?

RY: No. Probably younger.

HY: And I'd like to ask you about whatever you can remember about your family. Where was your father from?

RY: My father [Leo Anima Yuen] was born in Hanapēpē, Kaua'i. He was the second son of immigrants from China. His older brother was born in China and came to Kaua'i with his parents. Later, my dad's mother went back to China with the older son. Somewhere along the line my grandfather remarried. His second wife was part-Hawaiian and part-Chinese. My grandfather operated a rice planting and milling combine at Hanapēpē.

HY: So you were saying that your father, or your [grandfather] . . .

RY: Remarried.

HY: Remarried.

RY: They had a daughter and three sons. One of the sons became a dentist, one of the early dentists in Hilo.

HY: What was his name?

RY: William Nim. William Nim Yuen.

HY: William Nim.

RY: William Nim Yuen. Another son, Henry Bernard, became a doctor. Both came to Hilo to practice. My father was here.

HY: Do you know anything about your father's life?

RY: He was the first member of the family to live on the Big Island, coming to Pāhala, Ka'u, from Kaua'i in his twenties. He was born June 20, 1885, at Hanapēpē, Kaua'i. At Pāhala, he was employed at L. Chong's store [Lee Chong Store]. And he did some work for the postal service. He moved to Hilo and operated a dry goods store on Kamehameha Avenue, between Haili Street and Furneaux Lane, in the early [19]20s.

My dad sold the store to the Machida family, who operated a drugstore [T. Machida Drug Co., Ltd.] there for many years. After selling the store, he held various jobs. There was time in his life during which he wrote poetry, in Chinese. Some of his poems were published in Chinese[-language] newspapers. I suppose it [i.e., RY's interest in poetry] probably started with him (laughs). Member of Chinese organizations. Married Chang Kin [Chang is her family name] of Honoka'a. I haven't got the year.

HY: Okay.

RY: Four children. Wife died in early 1920s.

HY: This was your mother?

RY: Mother. And we went to live with our grandparents at Honoka'a. The children went to live with the grandparents. My father remarried in 1925.

HY: When you went to live with your grandparents, they were your paternal grandparents? Is that right? Or your maternal?

RY: Maternal grandparents.

HY: After your mother passed away, you went and lived with her parents with your father?

RY: No, my father stayed in Hilo and we. . . .

HY: Oh, your father stayed in Hilo.

RY: Stayed in Hilo and we lived with them [maternal grandparents].

HY: And so you and your siblings. . . .

RY: Younger brother and two sisters. My two. . . . While we were there, the youngest, our

brother, died. We came back to Hilo when my father remarried.

HY: Just to backtrack a little bit, do you know what generation your mother was? Was she first--- did she come here from China?

RY: She came from Canton, China.

HY: Okay. Do you know about what time?

RY: I have no dates on that.

HY: Okay. And do you know anything about your maternal grandparents, then?

RY: My grandfather operated a general merchandise store in a building at the Honoka'a-Haina intersection. The building also housed a tailor shop, an eating place, a saddle-repair shop, and a blacksmith shop.

HY: Was that part of the general store, all the tailor, the blacksmith . . .

RY: No, not part of the general store. It was a long building, with each of the five businesses having its own area.

HY: They all shared the same building, but they were different. . . .

RY: Yes, they all shared the same building, but each was a separate entity operating independently. I do not know whether my grandfather owned the building, leased it, or just rented space for his own business. The building provided the Honoka'a community with varied services at one convenient location. Having saddle-repair and blacksmith shops next to each other was a good idea in a community where horses still had a key role. The building has been torn down.

HY: What kinds of things did they sell in the general store part?

RY: Well, almost everything—just about all you would find in similar stores out in the rural areas.

HY: Did he import from China?

RY: No idea. I know that drummers [salesmen] from Hilo firms would stop by and my grandfather would order goods from them.

HY: Do you remember the name of the store?

RY: I think it was called Lin Yick Store [name of maternal grandfather was Lin Uck Chang].

HY: Lin Yick Store. What do you remember about that neighborhood?

RY: At the time I was there?

HY: Yeah, when you were. . . . So, now, this time you would be about---now you're about seven

or eight, is that right?

RY: Something like that.

HY: Yeah, okay.

RY: When we first went there, there was outdoor plumbing. No water system. No electricity. And by the time we left, I think we had electricity. I know we had a water system.

HY: And when you say no---there was no water system, is this like with a hand-crank pump?

RY: No, it was a water tank.

HY: Oh, I see.

RY: It was catching and collecting rainwater in a tank. I remember that one summer there was drought and my grandfather had to go down the Hāmākua Ditch to haul water. It was miles away. I remember seeing him carrying water in five-gallon kerosene cans back up a long hill. He carried the cans of water with use of a pole, like the way some Chinese men carried things: a pole on one shoulder, with a basket hanging from the front end of the pole and another basket hanging from the back end. When the water system began operation, we had toilets that flushed you-know-what away. No more smelly outhouses! (Laughs) We still had to go outside to use the toilet, in a separate building, because in an old house you couldn't find a place to put it.

HY: Could you describe a little bit more about the house itself that you lived in?

RY: It was a wooden house. I don't recall the number of rooms. My family slept in one section. My uncles and aunt, in a larger section, and my grandparents in another section. With ten people to contend with, my grandparents had to put a bed in the parlor. The kitchen was in another building. And there was a long porch or lanai. Children and grandchildren had many hours of fun on the porch. The porch was our train, a la Hawai'i Consolidated Railroad Co. [Hawai'i Consolidated Railway, Ltd.]. Our train made all the stops, in our mind, as the railroad did from Hilo to Pa'auilo. My uncles were the engineers and I was the ticket collector. I could call out all the names of all the stops.

And I remember a trip from Hilo to Honoka'a. My grandfather picked us up at the Pa'auilo Railroad Station in his Model T, one of the few cars in Honoka'a at the time. As the Model T went up a very steep hill from the Pa'auilo Station to the main road, the engine overheated. I don't know how long it was before we could resume the trip. Pa'auilo to Honoka'a—I'm not sure how many miles it was, but it took a little while.

HY: What was the neighborhood like, in terms of ethnicity?

RY: A Korean family operated the tailor shop and Japanese families operated three enterprises. We were Chinese. People of different races came into my grandfather's store. I do recall that during a strike I became friendly with a Filipino man, who was much younger than the others on strike. That was during the strike. [Possibly, the 1920 strike or the 1924 Filipino strike. However, RY would have been ten years old at the time of the latter.]

HY: That was in the---what year was that?

RY: I don't recall the year. But anyway, it was sometime. . . .

HY: In the twenties? So you would have been---you were still a child?

RY: I was probably in the second grade. But I do recall this friendly man. As far as racial prejudice was concerned, there certainly was none. There was no violence of any kind that I can recall during the strike. I suppose my grandfather took a beating as far as business was concerned.

HY: During the strike?

RY: Yeah.

HY: Was that . . .

RY: I really don't know how serious it was as far as his business was concerned. I was too young to understand such things. But his business must have suffered because the people on strike were his customers.

HY: Was there a lack of customers because they didn't have money because of the strike? Or did he have problems getting supplies?

RY: As I said, I was too young to understand. . . . But I would say it was a matter of money rather than of supplies. People on strike were not paid.

HY: Did this man talk to you about the strike?

RY: I do not recall what my friend and I talked about so many years ago. But in my mind, his friendship is a flower in my little lei of memories of my few childhood years in Honoka'a.

HY: Do you remember any of your classmates?

RY: I don't remember classmates. But let me toss out from memory names of those I knew personally and those I only knew of when I lived in Honoka'a: Hong Sing, Hon Chong, Fung Kam and Hong Fong Chang; Margaret, Bertha and Betty Lum; David Botelho; Elmer Andrade; Ah Hon and Ah Wing Chang; Robert Wassman; Dr. [C. L.] Carter; Dr. [Edward] Akioka; Henry Nakamura; Ah Toong; Awong; Ikeuchi; Morita; Kotake; Kuwaye.

HY: Was there an adjustment for you? You had just---you had lost your mother and then you were living with your grandparents, and then you were in a different community. Do you remember anything about that? What kind of adjustment that was for you?

RY: My grandmother [Lau Shee Chang] was my security blanket in this time of my life. She was very understanding, a kind and gentle woman. She always took good care of us, me and my siblings. I got to---like her very much. And I was an eager helper around her garden.

HY: Is this a family garden, or did you produce for commercial purposes?

- RY: Family garden, mostly family. I remember planting pole beans and that sort of thing. And of course, bitter melon. It was a favorite among the older Chinese, you know—bitter melon stuffed with pork. Some Filipinos liked the bitter melon. She sold what the family couldn't use.
- HY: Do you know when she [maternal grandmother] immigrated to Hawai'i?
- RY: I don't know and I don't know whether he [maternal grandfather] ever worked on a plantation. He might have since, generally, immigrants came to work on the plantation. Then I remember going to Chinese[-language] school in Honoka'a.
- HY: Did you do that after your. . . .
- RY: Yeah, after [public school] classes.
- HY: After classes.
- RY: I explored the gulches and went out on hikes by myself. I'd go out on different trails and I think I got lost a couple of times, but I managed to. . . . But I did enjoy being outside and going on hikes and exploring.
- HY: And then you moved back to Hilo. And what prompted the move back to Hilo?
- RY: Well, my father remarried.
- HY: Your father remarried.
- RY: And then we lived in a house in Waiākea Houselots.
- HY: You had lived there prior to moving to Honoka'a.
- RY: No. We lived in two other houses in Hilo before going to Honoka'a. One of the houses is still standing, although it appears run-down.
- HY: Do you remember where that is?
- RY: Kīlauea Avenue.
- HY: When you moved back, was it in the same district or was it in a different part of Hilo?
- RY: In different part of Hilo—in Waiākea Houselots. I lived there until '51; then moved here [1008 Kahoa Street].
- HY: And when you came back the second time, he had already sold his store?
- RY: He had already sold his store.
- HY: Can you describe the house that you lived in [in Waiākea Houselots]?

RY: It was a three-bedroom house with parlor, dining area, kitchen, and bathroom. There was a lanai with a bench. It was comfortable, adequate for us, until we had to build another bedroom and extend the kitchen. In the basement, we had a laundry area, restroom, and storage area.

HY: Do you remember what your stepmother was doing at that time?

RY: Well, she worked for a store and eventually she. . . . She loved cooking and eventually she operated a lunch shop at Haili-Kīlauea intersection and later moved to a Kamehameha Avenue site.

HY: Do you remember the name of it?

RY: No.

HY: Okay.

RY: My stepmother's name was Fannie (Chinese name, Fung Lan). Her family lived in Hilo. She had two brothers and three sisters. My step-grandmother lived next door to us.

HY: Not in the same house?

RY: Not in the same house. She lived with her son, Henry Lau. And I grew up knowing that family real well.

HY: What do you remember about that neighborhood? What [was the] ethnicity of people that lived there?

RY: My grandmother and an uncle were Chinese. And there was a Japanese family and a Korean family. At the time only one side of the street had housing. The other side was just a wild growth. Later it was opened up for housing.

HY: What kinds of things would you do for fun and recreation—playtime?

RY: All the usual sports, I suppose.

HY: Sports.

RY: Sports. We were members of the Dragon's Athletic Club and participated in various sports. Softball and. . . .

HY: Was that a Chinese league?

RY: No. There were not enough Chinese boys in different age groups to form a league. Some of us often played basketball together at night at the old Hilo Boarding School Gym until someone in the nearby dorm or cottage would yell out, "Hey it's after midnight."

(Laughter)

HY: Who would you play? Would you have---what other teams would you play?

RY: There were leagues. Our Dragon's [Athletic] Club would enter teams to compete with teams from other athletic clubs. One of the clubs was the Lincoln Wreckers. I do not recall the names of the others in the Hilo area. In the Waiākea area there was the Pirates team.

HY: So within Hilo you had enough teams to play each other?

RY: Right.

HY: You had mentioned that you had got involved in working on the school paper. Was that your first interest in writing and reporting?

RY: Well, I was interested in agriculture.

HY: Oh, I see.

RY: When I was in the ninth grade, I came down with TB [tuberculosis] and was hospitalized in a sanitorium [Pu'umaila Home]. I recovered and returned to school [Hilo Intermediate] two years later. I asked for the same courses I had when I left. The agriculture course was not available. There were two options. I chose English B [newswriting]. My teacher, George Fuji, encouraged me. I worked on the school newspaper and became editor in the second semester. An English teacher, Lois Bates (Brennaman), started a literary magazine and I was selected as editor of the first issue.

HY: What was it called? Do you remember?

RY: *Ka Hua 'Ōlelo*. It means, "The Word."

HY: I think I need to turn over the tape here, okay?

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

HY: Okay, you were talking about your early literary interests.

RY: Then at Hilo High School, in my sophomore year, I enrolled in the journalism class and worked on the school newspaper, *The Viking*, and the school annual, *The Blue and Gold*. In my junior year, I was editor of the school newspaper. What a thrill—and challenge—it was when our journalism class went down to the *Hilo Tribune-Herald* [From ca. 1933 to ca. 1949 the newspaper was rendered without a hyphen, i.e., *Hilo Tribune Herald*. Both before and after that time it was written with the hyphen and is rendered this way throughout the transcript. In the mid-sixties it became the *Hawai'i Tribune-Herald*.] one day and put out the newspaper for that day. I remember that our main (headline) story was that police had captured a murder suspect. One of our students handled the story like a veteran reporter.

HY: Do you remember his name?

RY: Han. John Han. He covered the story. Our class put out page 1, the jump page [for stories continued from page 1], and the sports page. [Other pages usually were made up the previous day.] We were not involved with work of the other departments of the newspaper.

HY: Did you cover high school sports?

RY: I did for the [*Hilo*] *Tribune-Herald*, Hilo Intermediate and Hilo High sports. The regular sports editor covered the big games.

HY: This was after you started working for the *Tribune-Herald*?

RY: No.

HY: Oh, while you're still in high school.

RY: Yeah. I covered intramural sports. In writing about teams involved in interscholastic competition, I would report changes in the lineup, injuries, etc. I also would supply the sports editor with information for pregame stories.

HY: You mentioned that you had TB.

RY: Right.

HY: And then you lived in a . . .

RY: Sanitorium [Pu'umaile Home].

HY: So, did they---I'm not familiar with how they handled the tuberculosis. Did they isolate you?

RY: Well, mainly it was rest. No medication of any kind. To keep us from spreading it, we were isolated---confined to a sanitorium.

HY: I see.

RY: I did not take any drugs or medication. Mainly it was rest. A more regulated sort of life. Nurses took care of us. A physician, Dr. Leo Sexton, made periodic visits. He was on call for emergencies.

HY: Do you remember the---were you in a room by yourself?

RY: No. We were in wards---wards with no walls. When it rained, we had to lower the awning. A roof and floor, but no walls. Clean air was supposed to be one of the best things for TB patients.

HY: Were you able to see your family at all during that time?

RY: There were visiting hours. And we were permitted to go home for overnight visits. But no

prolonged visits.

HY: And you said---was it two years that you were there?

RY: Well, probably a year or year and a half. I stayed home and then went back to school. I was out of school for two years.

HY: Do you remember if some of the other patients were children?

RY: We had children my age, and younger and older. There were adult patients. Various ages. Not sure there were babies.

HY: And you were all in this one large room?

RY: We were in separate wards, on the basis of age and sex.

HY: Was this part of the Hilo [Memorial] Hospital? Or was it separate?

RY: It was in Waiākea at one time. Later a new facility was built in Keaukaha and patients were relocated there.

HY: Okay then, going back to your high school time, that's when you really got involved in your journalism activities.

RY: All through my three years in high school, I worked on the school paper (editor, junior year) and on the school annual (sports editor, senior year). I graduated in 1935, when we were still feeling the effects of the depression. Jobs were scarce. I considered joining the CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps], created to provide jobs for young people. A number of my classmates moved to Honolulu to seek employment there. The more fortunate ones went to college, but. . . .

HY: Can you talk a little bit about how your family was affected by the depression?

RY: We were not rich, but had enough for three meals a day—Chinese-styled meals: rice, more vegetables, less meat (many times no meat). Enough for clothing and other necessities; for a special treat now and then (pastries that my father brought home for nighttime snacks); enough to own a piano and a car, a second-hand Chevy [Chevrolet] that took classmates to school dances and other events; enough for an occasional movie. We had a kerosene stove; no refrigerator, no washing machine, no water heater. For hot baths, we heated the water in a shed by burning wood (guava) and carried the water to our bathroom.

HY: Was your father able to work during that time?

RY: My father was employed until sidelined by poor health. He was a cashier at a restaurant (Sun Sun Lau Chop Sui House) and he worked at the construction site of a business building—not for the contractor, but for the owners . . .

HY: Do you remember who the owner was?

- RY: It was the Young family that owned Ah Mai and Co., a furniture and dry goods store. And my mother worked.
- HY: What did she do then?
- RY: She worked at a grocery store.
- HY: Did you have to work during that time?
- RY: While in high school, I wrote sports stories for the *Trib* [*Hilo Tribune-Herald*] and was paid five cents a column inch, then seven-and-a-half cents. Earned about \$7.50 a month. My sister, Ruby, also while in high school, was an usher at a theater, Palace Theater.
- HY: So you were saying that by the time you graduated in 1935, there was still some. . . . Aftermath of the depression?
- RY: [Nineteen] thirty-five. I think so.
- HY: Do you think that's why the job situation might still have been difficult?
- RY: I imagine so. At least I couldn't find a job. Of course, I wasn't qualified for anything. (Chuckles)
- HY: Can you explain how you got your job then? When you were on-staff, after you graduated, at the *Hilo Tribune*[-*Herald*]?
- RY: Ken[neth] Byerly, general manager; Virginia Bennett Hill, editor, and Milton Carter, advertising manager, came up with the idea for a position: part-time advertising salesman and part-time reporter. I accepted the ten-dollar-a-week position. I worked in the advertising department in the morning, in the editorial department in the afternoon. Two other reporters covered the important stories. I did the lesser, routine stuff.
- HY: Can you give an example of the type of story?
- RY: My number one assignment was going to the schools in the Hilo area once a week for news items.
- HY: Who would you talk to? Would you talk to teachers or students?
- RY: I talked to the principal, mainly.
- HY: Principal.
- RY: Principal. If I talked to the teachers, I would have to clear the story with the principal anyway. Sometimes I would be referred to teachers for details. I remember covering my first "big" story: a presentation by Edward Wingate, superintendent of the Hawai'i National Park, on future plans of the park.
- HY: Can you describe your advertising part of that job? What specifically . . .

RY: It was starting from scratch. No experience in selling. No experience in laying out an ad. It took time to develop these skills. It was difficult trying to get the smaller merchants to buy advertising space.

HY: Would you go on foot from store to store?

RY: More or less. The bigger stores were serviced by the more experienced staffers. They had their own accounts, while I was trying to set up accounts of my own. There were many a frustrating day in my first six months.

HY: Once you got somebody to agree to put in an ad in the paper, then what would be the next step?

RY: We would lay out the ad and. . . .

HY: Would you do the layout?

RY: After I've had some experience, I enjoyed doing layouts. Creative. . . . Coming up with an ad that gets the attention of the readers. An example: A dress shop was opening in Hilo. Our advertising manager suggested that in the opening ad we only use lowercase letters—no capitals. When published, the ad drew good comments, and the dress shop, thelma's, continued to use the lowercase letters. I recall that two of my ads were reprinted in a national trade magazine that featured layout ideas.

HY: What would it cost for somebody to put in an ad?

RY: I don't remember what the rates were.

HY: And what about your own wages at that time? Had they . . .

RY: I started at ten dollars a week with the prospect of "a raise in three months," I got it after two months—to twelve and a half. (Chuckles) Now moving on. . . . In 1937 or 1938, our number one reporter left to take a position in the administration section of the police department.

HY: Who was that?

RY: Wilfrid Hussey, an experienced versatile reporter. He did most of the top stories. In addition to being a sports editor, he covered the police beat, courts, government agencies, politics. And he did the movie reviews. I became sports editor, police reporter, and court reporter, although I had no experience in these two areas. I would report verdicts of trials, getting the information from the court clerk. If a trial required coverage, someone else would be assigned.

HY: What kind of control did you have over your own stories?

RY: Control rests with the editor.

HY: How big was the staff when you started?

RY: We had three staff members and the editor.

HY: Small staff. Was Jack O'Brien the editor then? Or did he come later?

RY: Later. He took over when Mrs. Hill left the paper, Mrs. Virginia Bennett Hill. O'Brien, a newspaperman from Seattle, joined the *Tribune-Herald* in 1937. He serviced national advertising agencies and wrote news stories. He became editor, probably in 1939.

HY: Were there any---did you get a sense that there were any stories that they just didn't want to cover?

RY: Well, not in the sense. . . . A story's newsworthiness was the deciding factor. A story with a high rating for newsworthiness would be published, sooner or later. Publication could in some cases be delayed for lack of time or lack of manpower at the time.

HY: What do you remember about the Hilo Dock Strike? That was one of the big stories in '38. [On August 1, 1938, local union demonstrators in sympathy with Honolulu workers on strike against the Inter-Island Steam Navigation Co. were met by Hilo police at pier 2. The subsequent confrontation resulted in the injury of fifty demonstrators.]

RY: I saw union members gather on the pier. Police and some other people were in a warehouse building, so I joined them. Among others in the building were Yukino Tsuzaki [who later married Lionel Fukabori], *Tribune-Herald* reporter, and Thomas Strathairn, local manager of Inter-Island Steam Navigation Co. After a while, police shut the doors. Police, some with rifles, could see out the building through an opening. For the rest of us, no openings, no windows to see through. When the shooting started, we could not see what was happening on the pier. It was scary, as we wondered whether people were wounded or killed. Later police informed us that we could leave the area.

HY: So, you didn't actually get to see?

RY: No, we couldn't see outside.

HY: Did you cover any of the aftermath of that? The trials?

RY: No. A *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* reporter, Donald Billam Walker, wrote subsequent stories for both the *S-B* [*Honolulu Star-Bulletin*] and *Tribune-Herald*, then owned by the *S-B*. He was in Hilo for a couple of days. I don't recall that there were any trials.

HY: Did you have an eight-hour working day?

RY: I did not have an eight-hour working day, not on a regular basis. I would work until I felt that what needed to be done was done. I would cover sports at night and return to the office to write my story. That way I would have time in the morning to wrap up the sports page by the deadline and go over to the police station. Once or twice a week, I would do a movie review before going to the police station.

HY: What theater? Was that Mamo Theatre?

RY: No. Mamo was not operating at that time. It was the Empire Theater and the Palace Theater. The Palace Theater was on one side of the street and across of the street was the Empire Theater.

HY: What street?

RY: Haili Street.

HY: So when you covered the police beat, how would you go about getting stories?

RY: At police headquarters a daily report listed accidents, names of dead or injured, arrests made, crimes committed, charges filed, calls for police assistance, etc. If there were a newsworthy item, we would ask for the report of the officer who handled the case. If more information was needed to complete the story, we would call the person involved or eyewitnesses. If there were injuries, we would call the hospital. If a serious accident, fire or crime had just occurred, we would try to get to the scene in time to do on-the-spot coverage and beat the competition.

HY: When you say competition . . .

RY: That was the *Hawai'i Press*.

HY: Oh, I see.

RY: The *Hawai'i Press* was a morning newspaper; the *Tribune* an afternoon paper. The *Hawai'i Press* has since gone out of business.

HY: How was your working relationship with your superiors? How would you describe that or characterize that?

RY: Oh, I would say that I got along very well with them. The general manager and I were good friends. We played cards (cribbage) together, talked story for hours. After he left Hilo and lived in Los Angeles, he regularly mailed me the *Los Angeles Times* edition that featured the Rose Bowl parade and the Rose Bowl football game.

HY: Was that Ken Byerly?

RY: Byerly. He loved sports. So we talked sports a lot. He came to my rescue when I quit my circulation job and had no job prospect in sight. Saying he wanted me to stay with the *Tribune-Herald*, he offered me a newly created job: salesman in the job-printing department. Although I had no job-printing experience, I accepted. Then I took orders for the printing of letterheads, circulars, cards, business forms, etc.

HY: Was that a full-time position?

RY: Full-time position.

HY: What kind of duties did you have in circulation?

RY: Mainly, get people to subscribe . . . At the time, the department was planning a house-to-house campaign around the island. I fitted in that. . . .

HY: Did you cover the whole island or just Hilo?

RY: Covered most of the island. Two of us went together to the various communities and plantation camps and convinced people to subscribe.

HY: What would you say the circulation was?

RY: At the time. Gee, I don't remember. When I left the *Tribune-Herald* it was probably 11,[000], 12,000.

HY: And that was in '74?

RY: [Nineteen] seventy-four. Probably close to 11,[000], to 12,000. [RY supplies information in session 2.] So at the time—I don't remember what the circulation was. But we did hustle and it went up.

HY: I think we should stop the tape here.

END OF SIDE TWO

TAPE NO. 22-71-1-93; SIDE ONE

HY: This is a continuation of the Ray Yuen interview on April 26, 1993. Circulation.

RY: I left circulation to go into job printing.

HY: Did you miss reporting or did you enjoy this phase. . . .

RY: I did not particularly enjoy being a job-printing salesman. But it was a job (chuckles). It was wartime. You couldn't drive around and around looking for a job. There was gas rationing. Several months later, another break: an opening in the editorial department. And so—on May 1—I came back to the editorial department.

HY: Just to back up a little bit, you first entered circulation and job printing for what reason? And then you went back to the desk for the war, I understand. . . .

RY: Well, I got tired doing the job. Not much interested in sports and not much interested in the news.

HY: You got a little burned out on it?

RY: Maybe that was the term, I mean I would say.

HY: Tired of . . .

RY: I thought: less wear and tear in the circulation department.

HY: So was that your choice, then, to change?

RY: Yeah.

HY: Oh, I see, okay, okay.

RY: At that time.

HY: Okay, do you remember where you were on December 7?

RY: I went regularly to the office on Sunday mornings to service subscribers whose papers had not been delivered. On December 7, a Sunday, I stopped for a red light en route to the office. Someone at the curb called out, "Japan bombed Pearl Harbor." Excited, I drove to the office. I became involved with the newsroom, in a way. Editor Jack O'Brien asked me to take some news stories to the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] office for clearance. I continued doing this daily for a while.

HY: Clearing stories?

RY: Clearing stories. The paper had to get clearance before publication. I found time from duties in the circulation department to help Jack. He now lives in Washington, D.C. and we have kept in touch over the years.

HY: So that day you went to the . . .

RY: Paper, right.

HY: Then. . . .

RY: Blackout was imposed that day. That night I got a call from the police department. The officer wanted me down at the station. "Huh? What did I do now?" (Chuckles) He said police had picked up an old Japanese man and needed an interpreter. And I said, "Oh, I don't know that much Japanese."

"Oh, we heard that you speak Japanese."

"Yeah, I know. I can do some swear words and that sort of thing, but not interpret."

So that was that.

HY: So you didn't go down there?

RY: No, I didn't go down. No.

HY: Do you remember who it was that they had picked up?

RY: Oh, I don't know. The officer said it was an older Japanese man who couldn't speak English.

HY: Can you describe what it was like, maybe to start with home life and say, the blackout?

RY: Well, it was you know, you had your . . .

HY: Did it change your daily operations?

RY: Yeah, you had your windows and doors covered with denim cloth and black sheets of paper or painted or whatever. And for a while you couldn't be on the streets at night. So there's not much of a life. I mean listening to the radio (chuckles).

HY: In the dark?

RY: No. You could turn your lights on after you had covered the windows with this heavy material, dark material.

HY: You mentioned gas rationing?

RY: Gas rationing.

HY: How did that affect you?

RY: Well, when I was in circulation, we had a special permit for extra gas to use in our work. People had to cut down on their traveling and use of their cars.

HY: Were there any food shortages that you recall?

RY: Not that I---maybe for some specific item, but in general food shortage was not a problem. Generally I would say that there was enough food. I didn't have a particular problem with food. My stepmother operated an eating place.

HY: She didn't have problems getting [food for her eating place] . . .

RY: Well, if she did I didn't know anything about it (laughs). I was more or less a carefree guy, you know.

HY: How was---was the paper affected by any of the shortages in terms of supplies for example?

RY: Newsprint and that sort?

HY: Yeah.

RY: I don't recall that we were. . . .

HY: Was the circulation affected by the war? Did it go up or down?

RY: Up. More people subscribed to keep up with news of the war and for local information---like announcements of regulations imposed because of the war. Troops were stationed at Kamuela and other places, and we delivered papers to them. Some of the people paid for the papers, and said, "Oh send 'em to the camps."

HY: Did the blackouts affect your working schedule at all?

RY: Not much as I recall. We were an afternoon paper and not a night operation.

HY: Do you know if it affected the other one . . .

RY: I don't know.

HY: And you changed from circulation to job printing and then you were back in the editorial department. And you said that was somewhat as a result of the war? Was that right?

RY: Yeah. By then, the paper was larger. More pages. Thus more staff needed.

HY: Did you cover stories then or were you mostly. . . .

RY: Desk work. In my new job, I was responsible for the inside pages. I edited stories from our rural correspondents and from our wire AP [Associated Press] service, wrote headlines, and did the layouts for the inside pages. I did not do much writing.

HY: Was the staff still four or five people?

RY: Five.

HY: You mentioned that you had to get FBI clearance.

RY: Then later on there was an office established with the military and copy went to that office. [The Federal Office of Censorship included army and navy censors.]

HY: Was that to clear news stories?

RY: News stories. Stories that might reveal troop movements, for instance.

HY: So they would send stories back to you, then, after they had looked at 'em?

RY: Right. We had---pretty quick. I don't recall if there were any.

HY: Do you remember if . . .

RY: Any incident where they. . . .

HY: Incident where they had changed . . .

RY: I was trying to recall. Yes, there was an incident. It involved our editor, Urban [M.] Allen, and a lieutenant colonel. It was in our pressroom, just before press time. I assumed the officer was in the pressroom to block publication of a news story. Whatever the issue it was resolved after a discussion between the two of them. And the press rolled. I probably was told what it was all about, but I do not recall.

HY: Did they ever dictate what kind of stories or was it. . . . Or did you do the stories and then

they checked it?

RY: Don't know. I was not the editor at that time.

HY: Did they ever request for stories to be done?

RY: I don't know. I was not the editor at that time.

HY: Do you have a general sense of how your friends and family responded? This is sort of a general question in terms of the general atmosphere of living in wartime.

RY: If you say in general, then in general, everybody—the whole lifestyle changed for that particular period. You just couldn't keep up with your lifestyle for various reasons. Blackouts and gas rationing and. . . .

HY: Was there a sense that people accepted this or would people feel resentful?

RY: Early on, people accepted it. It was the patriotic thing to do. You did what was required. You thought of greater sacrifices by others. It was a difficult period—a lack of freedom of movement. . . . A limited choice of things to do. Later as war wore on, there was grumbling.

HY: How did that affect your social life?

RY: Got around I suppose.

(Laughter)

HY: What would people do for entertainment?

RY: Not much.

HY: Were there nightclubs in Hilo that people frequented?

RY: Nightclubs were closed for a while—but they later reopened. Some people spent a lot of time at the bars (chuckles).

HY: Was alcohol---was that one of the things that was—a shortage of? Or was that easy to get? [Alcohol was rationed according to permits, which allowed the purchase of one quart of hard liquor per week.]

RY: There was a shortage. Speaking of liquor . . . I remember that there was a call for blood donors and that the donors would receive a shot of whiskey. And so, "Hey, let's go." (Laughs) A nurse at the hospital could not find a vein in my left arm to draw the blood. Nevertheless, they gave me my shot of whiskey. (Laughs) For some people there was the Five Islands gin manufactured in Honolulu. (Five Islands products were manufactured by Beverage Products.) Some people liked it. I didn't.

HY: In Honolulu, the prostitution business kind of boomed during wartime, like Hotel Street area. Do you have any sense, especially having worked the police beat, if that industry was

affected?

RY: Authorities closed what some people called the whorehouse (chuckles). It was in Hilo.

HY: Do you remember the name of it?

RY: Mango Tree.

HY: Was that part of an area I heard of—Butcher Lane?

RY: There was also Butcher Lane. But I think that the Mango Tree was the major. . . . I'm not too familiar with the subject (chuckles).

HY: I had read that they had required prostitutes to register, I believe with the police department, and this was going on in Honolulu. Do you know if they had that going on here?

RY: I don't know.

HY: I think they were registered as entertainers. They were called "entertainers."

RY: I don't recall that there was a permit system here.

HY: Okay. What was the ethnicity of your coworkers at the paper during wartime?

RY: Well, we had Caucasian, we had a Japanese, we had a Filipino at one time. Ricardo Labez [reporter for the *Hilo Tribune-Herald* who later became active in the ILWU]. I think you might have read about his death recently. And myself Chinese. Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, *Haole*.

HY: Were there any special restrictions on, say your Japanese coworker?

RY: No, not at all.

HY: What were your wages now that you were city editor?

RY: Gee, I don't remember.

HY: Gone up from twelve dollars I assume.

RY: The only thing I remember—I don't even remember what I made when I was editor—but I do remember that at one time I was making \$700 a month.

HY: I would like to ask you about some of the community leaders, if you have any recollections about them. For example, "Doc" [William Hardy] Hill?

RY: Doc Hill was a success story in business and politics. A legend. He peddled eyeglasses door-to-door, then went into many business ventures, and became a millionaire. In politics, he served in the territorial legislature and was a state senator. He was senate president at one time. He became publisher for the *Tribune-Herald*. I met him when I covered politics in 1938

and thereabouts.

HY: What year was that that he became publisher?

RY: In 1962. Doc Hill was a member of the group that bought the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* and *Hilo Tribune-Herald*, then owned by the *S-B*. In 1964, Donald Reynolds bought the *Hilo Tribune-Herald* from the *S-B*. I was editor for two years under Doc Hill and editor of the *Hilo Tribune-Herald* and its successor *Hawaii Tribune-Herald* for ten years under the Donrey [Media Group] organization.

HY: Then they went through the name change right? Dropped the "*Hilo*."

RY: Not immediately. Probably within a year or so.

HY: I know that later, much later on, you became a legislative aide for [U.S.] Senator [Hiram] Fong and I wondered if you had become interested in politics in the early days. So we're still at wartime, at what point did you become interested?

RY: Not active in politics. I did not campaign for candidates. I was not a member of a political party. But active in the sense that I covered politics for a while and, as editor, endorsed candidates. My interest in politics was work related.

HY: When they endorse candidates with the newspaper, would that come from the owners? Or how would that be decided? How would you go about endorsing candidates?

RY: We had a free hand as far as local politics was concerned. Nationally, the only time that I remember was: Support LBJ [Lyndon Baines Johnson] for U.S. president.

HY: In the sixties.

RY: That was the only time that I can recall. The instruction didn't come direct from the publisher. It came through channels.

HY: Who was the publisher then?

RY: Don Reynolds. (He died recently.)

HY: Oh, okay.

RY: To his credit—it was the only time he interfered with editorial decisions in my time.

HY: So as far as you can recall that was the only one time, or that was the voice that he wanted to. . . .

RY: Yes.

HY: So would you and your staff—or was it mostly you—that would decide on an endorsement?

RY: Mostly by myself. On one occasion a general manager wanted to have a say and. . . .

HY: Which general manager?

RY: I wouldn't want to name him.

HY: Were you---I know that Senator Fong is a Republican, were [would] you primarily endorse Republican candidates or were you . . .

RY: Not primarily. We considered a candidate's qualifications, integrity . . .

HY: So you wouldn't necessarily endorse along party lines?

RY: Not particularly.

HY: Not necessarily.

RY: Not necessarily, yeah right.

HY: After the war, had the paper gone through any changes because of that [the war] in terms of staff size, for example?

RY: Changes came not necessarily because of the war. Other factors included: need to replace old, inefficient equipment; increase in advertising lineage and circulation; more agencies to cover for news because government is bigger. A revolutionary change came when Donrey switched from "hot type" to offset printing after a strike [May 1967-July 1967].

HY: Then the strike was. . . .

RY: The issue was elimination of jobs, although they knew. . . .

HY: So was it workers striking . . .

RY: Agreement was reached that none of them would be laid off. So the new system went into. . . . The composing room was completely changed. No Linotypes, no hot lead, and. . . .

HY: Were those press workers, were they unionized?

RY: They were unionized.

HY: They were.

RY: There was a newspaper guild, a union for the printers, composing room people, and one for the pressmen. Unionization came during my time. But, holding managerial positions, I was not eligible for union membership.

HY: In terms of clearance from the FBI and censorship, how was that changed then after the war?

RY: Oh, everything ended.

HY: There was no leftover . . .

RY: No, no, no, no. No way. No one could tell us what to put in and what not to put in.

HY: Did your staff size increase at the postwar?

RY: Yes. It did increase. But I'm not sure how many more because I can't seem to remember names of those on staff at any given time.

HY: Let me ask you about a couple of the mayors [county chairmen]. What about "Jimmie" [James K.] Kealoha [chairman, County of Hawai'i (1948-1957)]?

RY: I knew him way back.

HY: Just going back again.

RY: Kealoha was a younger politician among such oldtimers as Sam Spencer, Billy Beers, and Alfred Kumalae—county chairman, county attorney, and county clerk for years and years. All four were Republicans. Kealoha held several elective offices over the years.

HY: How would you characterize him?

RY: A popular figure—quick with the handshake, smile.

HY: What about Clem Akina [became chairman of the board of supervisors in 1945]?

RY: I would say he was the opposite of Kealoha. More the quiet type. A Democrat. He was elected chairman in his first try for public office at a time when Republicans held political power. He was endorsed by the paper at that time. Urban Allen was then the editor.

HY: Did you say of the paper?

RY: The *Tribune-Herald*. The paper was then owned by the [Honolulu] Star-Bulletin, [Ltd.] and the *S-B* was owned by Republicans, the Farrington family. [Wallace R. Farrington was appointed governor of the Territory of Hawai'i (1921-1929). His son, Joseph, took over the management of the paper until his death in 1954, at which time, Joseph Farrington's wife, Elizabeth, controlled Honolulu Star-Bulletin, Ltd.]

HY: Did they have a say---did they pretty much have a say as far as endorsements?

RY: No, I couldn't say that because I wasn't editor at the time that the Farrington. . . .

HY: Right.

RY: I recall that another Democrat was endorsed by the *Tribune-Herald* when it was still owned by the *Star-Bulletin*. Martin Pence. He was elected county attorney over Republican Billy Beers. Pence went on to become a circuit court judge and a federal court judge. The editor then was Jack O'Brien.

HY: I think we're at the end of our tape again.

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape No. 22-72-2-93

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Ray Yuen (RY)

April 27, 1993

Hilo, Hawai'i

BY: Holly Yamada (HY)

HY: This is a continuation of the Ray Yuen interview. This is session number two. Okay, you found out some information about the circulation of the *Hilo Tribune-Herald*?

RY: Yeah. When I started in 1935, the circulation was in the 3,000 area. And when I left in '74, the circulation was 16,000. In '74, Hawai'i County's population was 72,000.

HY: Seventy-two thousand.

RY: Seventy-two, yeah. I don't recall what the population was in 1935.

HY: I wanted to ask you about the 1946 tidal wave. Were you reporting, then?

RY: On the morning of this April Fool's Day of tragedy and disaster, I was in my mother's lunch shop having breakfast. The shop was on the *makai* side of Kamehameha Avenue between Haili Street and Kalākaua Avenue. A cousin, Duke Tung, yelled as he entered the shop, "Get out now!" Or words to that effect. My mother, a sister and I got into our car. A block away or so, we heard it. Crash! We drove farther away—thankful we were safe. Later, I ventured into the disaster area. My mother's shop had been "waved" away. So had been many other buildings. It was mass destruction. Hilo's worst. I got to the office—later than my usual time. Harry Blickhahn, our editor who lived in Keaukaha near the ocean, was not in the office, and he had not called. I began to worry. Later—I do not recall what time it was—I saw him coming into the office. It was shock—and a relief. He looked as though he had been through an ordeal. His clothes were wet. He was shoeless. Luckily, he was uninjured. I drove him to my home for dry clothes and shoes. Back at the office we hoped that electric and telephone services would not go out—as they had earlier—and we went to work. Reporters Doug (Douglas) Boswell and Foreman Thompson later turned in their stories on the loss of life and property in Hilo. Frances von Elsner, one of our rural correspondents, reported from wave-damaged Laupāhoehoe, where several children had been killed. All three did an excellent job. Finally—after hectic hours—we put out the paper. Then off for a late lunch and a beer or two.

HY: What was the aftermath of the tidal wave on the community?

RY: To lessen the impact of future tidal waves (tsunamis), a stretch of land *makai* of Kamehameha Avenue was declared an open area—no buildings allowed. Then after the 1960 tidal wave, the

buffer zone was extended. Development of Project Kaiko'o ("rough seas") followed. Kaiko'o, raised with landfill to twenty-six feet above sea level, today is a thriving business community.

HY: What were some of the businesses that were affected?

RY: The Hawai'i Consolidated Railroad Co. [Hawai'i Consolidated Railway, Ltd.], with bridges, buildings, etc., destroyed, went out of business. For years, the railroad had hauled sugar from the Hāmākua Coast to the docks in Hilo for shipment to the refinery in California. Trucks now haul the sugar. Destroyed were lumberyards of two Big Five firms—Davies [Theo. H. Davies & Company, Ltd.] and Amfac [American Factors, Ltd.]—and Hawai'i Planing Mill [HPM Building Supply]. Many small business buildings were destroyed. Many, probably most, of their owners just gave up and never started anew.

HY: And in 1949 was when you got married to Alice [Sargent]?

RY: Right.

HY: I was interested in the fact that it was a mixed marriage, you're Chinese and she's from the Mainland. She's *Haole* from the Mainland. Were there any family reactions to your marriage?

RY: Well, on my side was none because members of my family had intermarried with my grandfather leading the way (laughs).

HY: Yeah.

RY: And Alice has never mentioned any reaction as far as her family was concerned. We get along well when we visit one another.

HY: So as far as you're aware, you had acceptance on both sides of your family?

RY: Yeah.

HY: Okay. [Nineteen] sixty-two you became editor.

RY: Right.

HY: And about that time Doc Hill became the publisher.

RY: Right. He offered the position to me.

HY: He—oh, I see. Were there any changes at the paper when he took over?

RY: My goal was to improve the paper and to become more involved in the community. A way to improve the paper came after a new owner took over in 1964 and switched the *Tribune-Herald* to offset printing [in 1967].

HY: So would you say it's more of a technological . . .

RY: That and . . .

HY: Change.

RY: The new technology gave us more flexibility. It was a faster, more efficient process that gave us more time—to write better stories, to get late-breaking news into the paper. Better pictures, better printing improved the appearance of the paper.

HY: And as far as editorial or story control, did it continue pretty much as it was or were there any changes?

RY: Under the—under. . . .

HY: With Don Reynolds?

RY: Don Reynolds. No editorial or story control.

HY: And then you continued to be editor until 1974.

RY: Right.

HY: At which point you became a legislative aide for Senator Hiram Fong.

RY: Yeah.

HY: Can you tell me how that came about?

RY: There was this opportunity to work in his office in Washington, D.C. I accepted.

HY: Did you know Senator Fong or. . . .

RY: I knew him.

HY: How did you know him? What was your relationship with him?

RY: Through politics. We met when he came here to campaign. On one of his trips, Senator Fong had lunch at Moto's Inn with Harry Blickhahn, editor of the *Tribune-Herald*, and me and several other Hiloans.

HY: Did you campaign for him?

RY: No. I didn't campaign for him.

HY: Was he one of the candidates that you would endorse?

RY: I endorsed Senator Fong on the basis of his legislative record, his being a member of the important appropriations and judiciary committees, and his seniority.

HY: So then, when you became legislative aide you went Washington.

RY: Yeah.

HY: Can you talk a little bit about the adjustment from living in Hilo to living in Washington D.C.? Or I guess in Virginia, yeah?

RY: It was a tremendous change—from the little city of Hilo to the capital of the nation—Washington, D.C. I looked at the sights in awe. Fortunately, a friend, Jack O'Brien, lived in Washington. He took me under his wing and helped me relocate. It was exciting being in Senator Fong's office and in the senate chambers observing the proceedings. I remember sitting in the back of the chambers and how excited I was when senators I recognized walked by. During the time I was in Washington, we had three presidents. And there was the Bicentennial Celebration.

HY: Oh, yeah.

RY: We had [Richard] Nixon, [Gerald] Ford, and then ["Jimmy," James Earl, Jr.] Carter. That was the time of Watergate, too. [Watergate: scandal involving a break-in at the national Democratic headquarters that led to the resignation of Richard Nixon.] And I watched the inauguration of Carter. I was standing in the snow and shivering and. . . .

HY: And what about your personal life? How did it change your personal life?

RY: Well, it meant finding new friends and of course we had to establish a new home. My younger children, Andrew and Julie, were with me and Alice. They attended school in Virginia. We made friends in our complex. A couple of them drove us to scenic and historic spots and kept us informed and gave us a helping hand.

HY: So your work as a legislative aide, were you surprised by any of the proceedings in Washington? Or was it . . .

RY: Well, it was a learning experience. We certainly had to, you know. . . .

HY: What were some of things that you weren't ready for, or aware of, that were new things to you as far as . . .

RY: Some concerns: How much would I need to know about the legislative process? How would I cope with complicated legislation? Would the people I had to work with in the senator's office and in other offices be friendly, helpful? Fortunately, Senator Fong, his administrative assistant, and the rest of the staff were a great team to work with, and I gained confidence on the job.

HY: Who were some of your close colleagues that you got to know when you were in Washington?

RY: The first two were Larry (Laurence K.) Nakatsuka and Rodger Betts. Nakatsuka and I worked together at the *Tribune-Herald*. Betts was an attorney from Maui.

HY: And they were in Washington at this point?

RY: Right. Then Aki Konoshima, the senator's press secretary; Robert Seto and Kenneth Wu, legislative aides.

HY: Sounds like there was a Hawai'i contingent that went with you folks.

HY: Partly. Konoshima and Wu were Mainlanders. There were several others from Hawai'i and several others from the Mainland on the staff.

HY: Can you describe a little bit more about the kind of work you did for him—you sat on committee meetings, etc.

RY: Senator Fong was a member of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health, Education, and Welfare [HEW]. I kept track of HEW funding legislation and reported to the senator. I reviewed the mail, pro and con, concerning such legislation; drafted letters responding to constituents' concerns, and submitted them to the senator's administrative assistant.

HY: So you were there until 1976?

RY: Right. When he retired I came back.

HY: How was your adjustment coming back, then, to Hilo?

RY: Well, I didn't find it too difficult. It was great seeing old friends and getting back in the swing of things here.

HY: Back home.

RY: I'd always wanted—my plan was to come back. So I came back and worked for the county [County of Hawai'i].

HY: How did you get your job with the county?

RY: I was notified that there was an opening. I applied, went for an interview, and was hired (in 1976). In my new job, I was planner for programs funded by the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA). I worked in the Office of Manpower Resources, headed by Stuart Kearns. I stayed with the county until 1982.

HY: Were you notified about this job because of your connections with the newspaper and your—I know you covered the police beat, so you were somewhat familiar. . . . And you had worked in the court system so you were familiar with that system—was that your connections there?

RY: You mean, did that influence the selection?

HY: No, is that how you were aware of the job and also would make you qualified?

RY: I had indicated to various people that I was looking for a job. So when this opening came up I was notified.

HY: Had you noticed any changes from—this is a very different way of working with the criminal justice system than reporting the police beat, I understand, but had you noticed any changes in the system or different personnel that was there?

RY: Well, Third Circuit court in 1938 was in the Federal Building on Waiānuenue Avenue; it is now in the State Office Building in the Kaiko'o area; police department building in 1938 was on Kalākaua Avenue; now at 349 Kapi'olani Street. Judges were: in 1935, Delbert Metzger; now, Shunichi Kimura and Riki May Amano. Police department: in 1938, Sheriff Henry K. Martin; now, Police Chief Victor Vierra.

HY: What were some of the programs that you were involved with?

RY: In one, our office coordinated planning for a public forum: "Juvenile Crime: Stricter Laws in the 80's?" Scholars, resource people from the criminal justice system, and a newsman expressed their views and answered questions from the floor. A juvenile court mock trial was conducted to give the public an idea of what went on behind closed doors in juvenile court. The Hawai'i Committee for the Humanities funded the project.

HY: What is your observation about crime in Hilo over the years?

RY: I've been retired for ten years. I've been out of touch with the system. No comment.

HY: Your juvenile mock trial—sounds like one of the grants that you tried to get were for things like education about the . . .

RY: What about?

HY: About---for education, public education about the justice system. Was that fairly typical or was that just one component of the type of work you did?

RY: Our office conducted a survey in which we asked Big Islanders to respond to a number of questions. The *Tribune-Herald* carried a story about the survey. The main role of our office was to coordinate planning for programs to combat crime and juvenile delinquency, and to help seek funds to implement the programs. LEAA was the main funding source, via a state agency that reviewed and recommended program proposals for funding.

HY: Who were some of the people that you found more supportive of your agency?

RY: You mean the . . .

HY: Well, politically. Like politically. Who were some of the. . .

RY: Well, I don't know of anybody that wasn't against crime (laughs).

HY: So you found a receptive atmosphere?

RY: I found that people were supportive if you had workable ideas and programs.

HY: So you had a receptive ear for this?

RY: Yeah.

HY: And you retired and . . .

RY: In '82.

HY: Can you talk a little bit about what your activities have been in retiring? Actually before we start that, I should maybe flip the tape.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

HY: You were mentioning that you were still in Washington for the Bicentennial in '76. What do you remember about that?

RY: Exhibits of our heritage in museums and visits to historic places and monuments stirred within me a feeling of pride in our country.

HY: I remember the television aired these "Bicentennial Minutes" [history-based vignettes].

(Laughter)

RY: I didn't have to watch television. I went out.

(Laughter)

HY: Okay, you were talking about your . . .

RY: Retirement.

HY: Retirement.

RY: It was a slow process. Now, I am happy just taking it easy: playing with grandchildren, singing to myself, spending time outdoors, doing crossword puzzles, reading poetry, enjoying quiet times with Alice. I hope to publish a book that I've been working on for several years. My book brings together in one volume positive thoughts on old age and other aspects of life. My book, with selections from 120 poets, would be a resource to lift the spirit of the elderly.

HY: Have you ever read your father's poetry?

RY: Well, no. He wrote it in Chinese and I. . . .

HY: Yeah.

RY: My sister, Ruby, wrote poems for special occasions. A number of them were published in the *Tribune-Herald*. And one of her poems appeared in a book, the *Songs of Helen [Desha] Beamer*. She had talent.

HY: You also—you continued to volunteer with the county during your retirement years?

RY: I volunteered six months of my time to the agency that I had been with. Straightened out files and discarded junk. As for community service, I have been a member of the Board of Directors of the Hawai'i County Economic Opportunity Council for about ten years.

HY: And you also have five kids?

RY: (Laughs) Yeah, all doing well. Very proud of them. Mary Lou is with the state Office of Planning in Honolulu. Christopher is an attorney in Hilo, and is a member of the state Board of the Land and Natural Resources. Lori is with the state Employment Service in Kona. Andrew is with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Honolulu. Julie, in Kamuela, stays home with her young children, as did her mother—and is doing a good job, as did her mother. Children and grandchildren, oh, what a joy!

HY: I think that this has covered much of what I wanted to discuss with you. Is there anything you would like to add?

RY: No. I think you've covered it all—and covered it well.

HY: When you look back on the war years, what comes to mind? Any response now that it's fifty-some years later?

RY: I never want to live those years over again.

HY: Okay, anything else you would like to add? Observations, thoughts?

RY: Well, I've had a good life. I would say that I'm happy with the way things turned out.

HY: Okay. Thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW

AN ERA OF CHANGE

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